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I BUILD
MY HOUSE



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I BUILD MY HOUSE

I Build My House

By

JANE BURR

Author of "City Dust"



NEW YORK
JAMES T. WHITE & CO.
1918

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TO
MY MOTHER
WHO ALWAYS BELIEVED

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I BUILD MY HOUSE

MANIFESTO

*Make way! We come—whose banners brush the sky—
To take from man his best, our best to give;
To march with life, and not watch life go by;
To laugh—to love—to think—to know—to live.*

THE WAY OF THE PROPHET

BECAUSE I thought a brand new thought,
My father raged and stamped and fought;
My mother shuddered low with fear;
My sister spilt a social tear;
My brother shunned the mystic "They"
Because of all that "They" might say;
The mystic "They" avoided me
As though I oozed with leprosy;
And when they all refused the light,
I knew at last that I was right!

WOMAN'S RIGHTS

“**T**O live within a dream-tight, light-proof shell;
To think no thought that isn't furred with mold;
To dress becomingly but not too well;
To squelch your youth by looking somewhat old;
To love the sheep-life and the sheltering fold;
To see your men friends—well, say—some rare Sunday,
And married, to be sealed and pigeon-holed:
These things are Woman's Rights,” says *Mrs. Grundy*.

“To let another engineer your fate
While you play puppet to that other's will;
To live submissively and propagate,
Or trudge alone the economic hill;
To spit yourself upon the kitchen grill,
And live the doll-house life till kingdom come;
To know your husband false, and love him still:
These things are Woman's Rights,” says *Father Glum*.

“To live on substitutes for vital truth,
And end by bogging in the miry ways;
To squander on my children all your youth,
And calmly rock alone in after days;
To dance, a mote in my resplendent rays,
To glean from me such knowledge as you can;
To lie, to cheat, to steal, and find it pays:
These things are Woman's Rights,” says *Everyman*.

HO-YO-TO-HO!

IN a streak of light across the skies,
I shall burst in a blaze against your eyes;
I shall live on the peaks of the world you've made,
And the power in me shall make you afraid
To wallow and snort in the slime below;
For the time will come when a woman shall know.

You'll clutch at me with your almond nail,
As I skim the blue in the comet's trail;
You'll rage and stamp in your satin bows,
In your broidered shirt and your silken hose,
And the snarl of your curses shall reach my ear
As the echo of echoes, echoing near.

And then when you cannot hinder my flight;
When the rights of man are a woman's right;
When the world is a man's and a woman's world,
My fluttering wings shall be unfurled,
And cleaving the sky, with a comrade's pride,
I shall mark you out, and drop to your side;

For the whole of me and the whole of you
Is the thing God's promise is fastened to;
And the loss of you was a bitter pain
That smote me over and over again.
When the light I know, is the light you see,
I'll take you back to the heights with me
Forever—for all eternity.

RE-BIRTH

THAT tearing through the smutted veil!
That rush of air! That untried wail!
At first I wept and bawled at fate
That birth should come to me so late;
And then I thumbed the unscrawled years,
And laughed, exulting, through my tears;
For ten were left for passion's fling
In which my tingling flesh would sing;
And then ten more before the brink;
And then ten more to weigh and think;
And then ten more to rock and smile,
And know that life had been worth while!

MOTHER-HEART

OMother-Heart with your aching throb,
With your endless watch and your thankless job,
How rollicking sweet your laughter skips
To the bubbling song from a baby's lips!
How sturdy the glow of your graver charm
That shelters the whole wide world from harm,
All bruised and battered—and still you yearn!
I sing my verses that men may learn
How small your pay, how gallant your part,
Valiant, unconquered Mother-Heart.

A WOMAN SPEAKS

FOR to spend the day-time scrubbin' in an endless
dull routine,

For to spend the night-time sobbin' out her grief,
For to spend the dream-time dreamin' she was made to
be a queen—
Is a woman's occupation here in chief.

Oh! the ladies in their carriages would like to think
they're free,

'Cause they never has to use their waxy hands;
But their hearts is always cankerin' in them the same
as me,
For our eyes has met, and women understands.

And the only bitter thing that's left for livin' ones is
death,

And the stiflin' air below makes me afraid;
Yet I orten't be, for crampiness and suffocatin' breath
Is the only thing for which a woman's made.

IF I WERE A PAINTER

IF I were a painter, I'd borrow
The crimsonest blossoms that grow,
And touch up the dull lips of sorrow,
And redder pale cheeks to a glow;
I'd copper the hair that is grayest,
And smooth off the wrinkles of years—
I'd change faded things to the gayest,
And paint out the very last tears.

FEALTY

IT'S a gentleman's place to stamp and swear,
And shoot his fist through the blackened air;
It's a woman's place to quiver and stare,
And lift her eyes in a hopeless prayer.

It's a gentleman's place to wrack and smudge,
And grant her peace with a lasting grudge;
It's a woman's place to hearken and trudge
In the way laid down by her earthly judge.

It's a gentleman's place when his spleen is spent
To salve his helot with blandishment;
It's a woman's place to be redolent
Of honeyed loving and sweet content.

ENVOY

A woman is wrought of steel and flame,
And the heart is free if the tongue is lame,
And the soul runs wild that you think you tame—
But a woman is bound to play the game.

VICTORY

STENCH and crime and bloody meed,
Under the sunlit skies—
Out where the carrion buzzards feed,
Out where the War-God sates his greed,
And youth in his beauty dies!

Teuton or Slav, Saxon or Gaul—
Which stirs the blood in me?
Whose are the banners to hold in thrall
Mountains and rivers and seas and all—
Where shall the Victory be?

Woman I am, and mother, too;
Mine is the blood you spill;
Mine are bones your bullets hew;
Mine is the heart you rifle through;
Mine are the sons you kill.

Teuton or Slav, Saxon or Gaul?
None stirs the blood in me.
Peace be the banners that hold in thrall
Mountains and rivers and seas and all—
Peace be the Victory!

THE REWARD

OUT of my arms you have wandered,
Dear little, brave little boy;
Passionate mother-love squandered
All on a first little joy;
Only a toy,
Dear little, brave little boy.

Blinded with tears I caressed you,
Gave you the chance to be free;
Choking with misery I blessed you,
You who were visiting me;
Now I can see
You are much happier, free.

Gaily you beckon the others,
Gaily they leave me alone;
Go little sisters and brothers!
Following wraiths of your own;
My seeds are sown;
I shall sit weeping alone.

THE WAY OF MOTHERS

I'VE tucked him under the blankets,
I've snuffed the flickering light;
His gaping satchel mocked and stared,
As I said, "My son—good-night."
Tomorrow and tomorrow
I'll come, but he will have flown;
Tomorrow and tomorrow
I'll rock by the hearth alone.

I've kissed his wee little bruises,
I've buttoned his round-collared shirts;
Taught him the tales of gnomes and elves,
And bound his baby hurts;
I've watched beside his cradle
When the fevers raged and burned,
And stood with God at the turning
Where the bigger things are learned.

And now the nesting is over,
He aches for the spread of his wings;
Aches for *his* chance—his bitter chance
To learn the bigger things;
And way out there who'll soothe him—
So helpless they are, our men,
I'll go once more while he's sleeping,
And tuck him in again.

THE OLD BELLE'S REVERIE

HERE beneath the shaded glare
In my easeful, leathern chair,
I am hungry for the street.
Always through my sturdy walls
I can hear the quick footfalls;
And the outside, careless calls
Make me hungry for the street.

I am hungry for the crowd,
For the garish and the loud,
For the organ grinder's tune,
For a night beneath the moon,
For the feel, again, of June,
For the chance to steal a sweet,
For a peep through blinds to see
Happiness that beckons me—
I am hungry for the street.

Dancing street I used to know—
How you ripple by below,
Swaying, pushing, crowded street!
Though I'm old and warped and sere,
And they make it pleasant here
With the fire and cushions near —
I am hungry for *you*, street!

EVERY MOTHER

OUR passion swept by, like a midsummer rain
In the wake of a shimmering light,
And my soul struggled up through the dullness and pain,
And wandered alone in the night.

Oh! the byways of life are tear-misty and dim,
When the romance of loving is done;
So the castles I builded for me and for him,
I builded anew for his son.

My baby, my poet, my blossom, fresh blown—
My lover! How could you have guessed
That my senses leapt skyward to God on his throne
With your cherry-ripe lips at my breast!

My boy, O my worshipful, worshipful boy—
With your voice like a querulous bird,
And the bursting of spring in your reckless young joy,
And your goldeny vision unblurred!

How could she have come with her musical sigh,
With her roses of youth and her charms,
With a beckoning passion afire in her eye
And stolen you out of my arms!

O woman, you've shivered the bloom of my life;
Again in the darkness I wait;
I—love you? No, never! You thief of a wife!
I hate you—I hate you—I hate!

DREAM BABIES

WHEN the day is gray and the sky hangs down,
And the sunbeams melt to raining,
And the folks go slushing about the town
In a mood of deep complaining,

It's then I sink in my fireside chair
With my heart in a mist of glories,
And their little pink fingers in my hair
And their little ears pricked for stories;

And I hold them close and I whisper low,
Till a fillet of sun comes beaming—
Then I coax and beg but they laugh and go—
My babes of the gray day-dreaming.

THE VISION

I'VE seen a vision—
And my lips are warm and trembly pink,
And my eyes are shining blue,
And I stand expectant on the brink
Of the world where things come true.

There is a vision—
Where the brow is wreathed in laurel leaves,
And ribbons span the breast,
And the poor old world itself believes
That the laurel leaves are best.

But Oh! my vision—
Is the one where baby fingers cling
And the hearth's a cherry hue,
And the gleesome voices rise and ring,
And my love is near and true.

MY BROTHER

HOW we rode the glassy breakers! How we tracked
the silver dew!
How we scaled the icy hill-tops, in the early morning
blue!
How I swore to you, my brother, that no knight with
gallant song,
Could bewitch me into leaving you! But brother, I was
wrong.

Love you still? I do, my brother. I would soothe
your hurts and woes,
But I'd bare my breast, and face for *him*, the world's
revengeful blows.
If you chose me as your guardsman, you could trust me
not to shirk,
But for *him* I'd wear my finger-tips down to the bone
with work.

Oh! I still would tramp the forest at your side through
all the night,
And I still would climb the mountains in the crystal
morning light;
But my heart is by the open fire where other worlds
grow dim,
And I long to light the candles and just dream at home
with *him*.

RE-MARRIAGE

IT seemed so wonder-sweet, at last to come back home to him—
My whole soul full of passion and my tired eyes tense and dim.
He touched my fingers lightly in that senseless, jostling crowd,
But the choruses within us both were singing long and loud.
His lips ran on of country-folk, of trains and motor-boats,
But all the time our sobbing hearts were beating in our throats.
The highway sped beside us with the springtime in the trees,
But both the hungry hearts in us were sighing with the breeze.
We looked into each other's eyes, and knew that pain was done—
That life had thwacked and pummeled us, but we at last had won.
And who was I to threaten fate, and shudder at the cost?
And what cared I for women-folk that he had loved and lost?
And what to him were other lands and smiles and laughs of men?
The only thing that mattered was, that we were one again.

BAD MAGIC

WE used to live a thrilling sort of way,
Because our very souls were weather-blown;
We owed the landlord and we couldn't pay;
We owed for bread and milk and telephone;
The house was full of stuff we didn't own,
Yet all the time we bluffed and wore a smile;
We kinged and queened it on a credit throne:—
It's different now since Johnny made his pile.

The ring of life is gone from every day,
The minutes murmur in a monotone;
Our home's a gold-leaf, bric-à-brac display,
But all the fun of owning it has flown.
I sit and twirl my thumbs like some old crone;
The bills are paid, but oh! I loved the guile
That filled the day whose end was all unknown:—
It's different now since Johnny made his pile.

The very air we breathe seems thick and gray,
The words we speak come dull and dead as stone;
We used to scheme—we had so much to say—
We used to like to touch the danger zone,
Then draw each other backward with a groan;
Ah me! those little fears were well worth while,
For then I never found myself alone:—
It's different now since Johnny made his pile.

ENVOY

O good old days of nerve and stiff back-bone,
When debts and bluff and love were all the style;
How sweet it was, the future then foreshown:—
It's different now since Johnny made his pile.

GHOSTS

THERE are prim ghosts who draw the winding sheet,
Regretting wantonness, though it was sweet;
My yawning ghost will shake his weary fist—
Regretting but the sweetesses I missed!

INDIAN SUMMER

IF all the rugs of Persia lay outspread
In competition with each tinted hill—
How frail would seem the oriental skill
Against the flaming woof where summer bled!
With all its million skeins of gorgeous thread,
The summer sun has woven with a will,
And now at last the universal thrill
Of Autumn's burning gold and coppered red!
And yet the royal dye is fraudulent;
One biting blow, and all the glory's tossed—
A faded drugget on the country lanes;
The very noonday sun is impotent.
Last night a stealthy wind was at the panes,
And on the bridge at dawn I saw the frost.

TOGETHER

BY some weird charm within us two
We merge as streams of sunshine do,
And forth in heaven-guided flight
Flash out as one impassioned light.

And then a clash, a shade athwart—
And planets are not more apart;
Vain commonplaces pass to screen
The wreckage of what lies between.

I look again if it be he;
Bewildered, too, he stares at me,
And then there blows a subtle breath
And trembling back from spirit death,

Led by some instinct half divine,
His love comes wavering to mine;
Like Adam wakened from the clod,
Our fingers touch the hand of God.

THE WAY OF LOVE

OH! One does the loving, the other is mute;
One sits in deafness, and one pipes his flute;
So I laughed as I counted my worth in pure gold,
And gave him my heart as a jewel is sold;
But the youth in me flamed at his first tender touch,
And I loved, and I piped, and I gave overmuch,—
But I'd rather go soaring and venture a fall,
Than die never knowing the heavens at all!

SO YOU WONDER?

SO you wonder what I'm thinking
All the livelong lazy day?
I am living fairy hours
High in pyramided towers;
I am bosom deep in flowers,
Silver brooklets all the way—
These are things that keep me thinking
All the livelong lazy day.

So you wonder what I'm saying
When I whisper to the dew?
I am bidding love come nearer,
Tell me sweeter, tell me clearer,
That he holds me ever dearer,
That his heart is ever true—
These are dream-things that I'm saying
When I whisper to the dew.

So you wonder what I'm doing
When I straggle in and out?
I am winding wreaths of daisies,
Dancing hymns and singing praises,
For my lover while he lazys
Where there's neither fear nor doubt—
These are dream-things that I'm doing
When the city's blotted out!

THREE LOVES

THERE were three loves that filled my years
With piping laughter, bitter tears
And ragged sighs;
Three loves that soothed me with their sweet,
Or stamped me, trembling, under feet,
With choking cries.

The first—ah, mother dear!—your lips,
Your eager, steady finger-tips,
Your sweeted breast.
How gay we rollicked, hand in hand,
Across the green, enchanted land!
That love was best.

And then the love too soon begun,
Too fiery red and too soon done—
The love that aches;
The love too great, the love too brief,
That leaves one all alone with grief—
The love that breaks.

And then the autumn love that came
Without the blare, without the flame,
And warmed my soul;
The love that lighted all my way
Against the dark of yesterday,
And made me whole.

THE REPROACH

FLAMING with passion I came
To lean on the edge of your heart,
Yours was a treacherous game;
Yours was a play-actor's part,
When all in a glory I came
To lean on the edge of your heart.

And the deeper I gave of my soul,
The deeper my love seemed to live;
I knew but one luminous goal—
To give you and give you and give;
And the deeper you drank of my soul,
The deeper my love seemed to live.

And you threw me an hour or two
At the end of your glorious day—
So little my love meant to you;
So little you gave me for pay—
A half-hearted hour or two
At the end of your glorious day.

CONFESSiON

LOVE looked so dull; I never dreamed
How dear he was—so cheap he seemed;
Forsaken now, I know that he
Was sun and moon and stars to me.

LOVE'S UNWISDOM

ONE broken word from a trusted mate,
And love is never again the same;
It calls itself by the still sweet name,
But it knows itself by the name of hate.

The lantern hangs by the garden gate,
But dimly burns the sputtering flame;
One broken word from a trusted mate,
And love is never again the same.

He stands alone in the dark to wait,
And a thrill turns back with a sob of shame;
He hates perhaps where he would not blame.
Wherefore this sullen decree of fate?
One broken word from a trusted mate,
And love is never again the same.

IF YOU WOULD LOVE

IF you would love a little less;
If you would answer my caress;
If but my gentler warmth might grow
Unfrightened by your passion's glow—
I might desire with eagerness.

True, maids there are who would confess
Their tender moods, did you but press;
Whose love would surge and overflow,
If you would love.

And yet I ache with dull distress
When you unwittingly transgress.
O lover! here's a thing to know:—
The whole of love you shall not show!
Be wise and leave a thrill to guess—
If you would love!

VENOMOUS FORTY

O, YOU simpering maids
With your conquering breasts,
And your Titiany braids
And your echoing jests!
I am scornful of you,
For your tragedy waits.
I am through! I am through!

I have smoothed back my hair,
And sponged white my face,
And why should I care
That you've stolen my place?
It's a rôle you shall play,
And I gloat, for I know—
That it's just for a day.

And each blemish and blotch
I shall welcome with joy,
And your years I shall notch
On a devil-made toy;
Go, conquer your Gaul!
You will stumble, and then
I shall roar when you fall.

O you credulous maids,
With your jubilant breasts,
And your coppery braids,
And your mimicking jests!
I am scornful of you,
For your tragedy waits.
I am through! I am through!

RECOMPENSE

THERE is no love-word spoken,
There is no joy so gay,
That will not leave you broken
Before the end of day.

And all the bitter aching,
And all the stifled cries
But turn to merrymaking
Before the sunset dies.

LOVE IS YOUTH

FOR the solemn old, sober old workaday mill,
You may choose him with frost on his head;
But oh, for the madcap, tempestuous thrill,
His blood shall run new, molten lead!

THE RENEGADE

“**I** KNOW they are exquisite visions to see,
But plumage and draperies are not for me.
If nothing but patches and powder will please,
I’m lost, for I will not deceive him with these.

“My soul is astir with a different art;
A breast all a-quiver, an echoing heart,
A lash drooping over an iris, tear-dim,
A throat throbbing brave with the loving of him.”

“No, no! Learn the steps of your life’s capriole!
A curse on the woman who juggles her rôle!
Go, dance till you drop at the Bangle and Frill,
If you won’t perform for him—some woman will!”

THE FEAR!

OH! drop me shroudless down into the sea
Where warted devils claw and crunch with glee,
Where skeletons parade the deathless night—
Their sockets sprouting green anemone;

Or, stretch me stark upon the pulsing plains
Where she-wolves wail and swell their maddened veins,
Where life is scorched and shrivelled in the light,
Then left to rot beneath the ruthless rains;

Or, raise me high upon some jagged peak
Where buzzards pick and scratch and night-things shriek,
Where lazy lizards droop their sleepy eyes,
And hordes of angels, nearing heaven, speak.

You shall not wrap me under carven stone!
I'd rather vultures danced my littlest bone.
I fear not death, for life has made me wise—
I only fear the endless watch—alone!

BEAUTY'S LAST STAND

IDARE not steal moments for sleeping,
I dare not take time to exhort,
I dare not risk sighing or weeping—
The time is so short!

Oh! where shall I spend my last flowers?
Oh! where shall I turn for a thrill?
Oh! where shall I squander the hours—
Before youth is still?

AT NIGHT

IWAKE—I do my woman's job
And elbow roughly through the mob
Like every other soul that is for hire.

Asleep—and soft across my lips
The love-god lays his finger-tips.
Ah me! all dreams are just fulfilled desire!

ONE TIME

ONE time I throbbed, and burnt, and yearned
For all the wonders to be learned;
My trembling fingers clawed the door
Of knowledge that had marched before;
I ached for love, for fame, for pain,
For thrills of war and golden gain,
For fountains built of porphyry,
For silver boats to thread the sea,
For wingèd things to split the sky,
For crowns and mighty seats on high.

And now for all I've won and lost,
For love and all that love has cost,
For joy, for pain, for wintry chills,
For hope, for love, for quickened thrills—
I ask but that the throbings cease,
And leave me here alone with peace.

“UNTO ITSELF”

OH, who can play when we bid him to play?
And who can hold his youthfulness still?
And who can pray when the priest says pray?
And who can thrill when the law says thrill?

For the budding and bursting of life, is play;
And prayer, is the touch of the Lord's right hand;
And love, is only the bubble and spray
On the mystical shores of a far-away land.

THE WAKENING

THE mother within me laughed and sang
In the joy of a love to be—
Strawberry lips and milk-sweet breath
Asking their life of me!
My dream-baby's hair was gold like the moon,
My dream-baby's eyes were blue,
My dream-baby's voice was a rapturous croon—
But my dream-baby never came true!

The mother within me wept alone,
While I strode with a stately show,
Battling the curse with a face of steel,
Daring the world to know.
My dream-baby's hair grew faded and pale,
Her blue little stars closed tight,
And the rapturous croon was a comfortless wail
As she left me alone in the night.

The mother within me shivered cold,
And the love in my heart grew still;
Soulless, I sheltered a stranger babe,
And my loving awoke with a thrill.
Ah! babe of another one's flesh and bone,
Ah! babe of the mist and the dew!
But babe of my heart and my soul—babe my own—
Ah! baby, real baby, come true!

THE WONDER WAY

BEFORE he came, I calmed my soul,
And tuned my quivering breast;
With lullaby and barcarole,
I stilled him in his nest;

And piled the books of wisdom high,
And thumbed them one by one,
That I might never hear him sigh
Of wrong that I had done.

But when I held him, wisdom flew—
My baby boy! My dove!
I only knew—I only knew—
The wonder way to love!

THE PRICE OF MOTHERHOOD

IBORE him when my faith was new,
And crushed him close to me;
Around my thumb I curled each ringlet
That crowned his head—my baby kinglet!
I did not know that babies grew,
Or that they struggled free,

Till one night, dreaming in the gloom
Of cribs and baby cries,
He faced me there all strangely glowing,
With stranger words his tongue was flowing;
His stranger soul relit the room,
And smouldered in his eyes.

The world had known it all along;
Had clung about his chair;
Had listened to his words of beauty,
And gone, remade about its duty;
It was so treacherous and wrong,
To leave me dreaming there!

I quit my rocker by the fire,
And followed with the crowd;
It was this man of mine who led them;
It was the word of him that fed them.
Because of all his pure desire
The brain of me was proud.

I garnered all the truths he said,
And crushed them close with joy;

Like all the world I stood and listened;
Across my eyes the tear-drops glistened;
But oh! the heart of me was lead—
Where was my little boy?

THE FIRST BABY

OH! the vital crushing joy
Of my little baby boy!
I have kissed his precious nose,
I have kissed his tiny toes,
I have hugged him till my breath
Seemed to smother me like death.

Ah! those sucking, tender lips
And those clinging finger-tips!
Warm and intimate he rests
On my full and yearning breasts;
All that mighty rush of pain—
Give me, Lord! give me again!

THE WEDDING NIGHT

FULL in the blaze of all the brilliant light,
I passed the people there;
Veiled were the golden fillets of my hair;
The crowd stood wonder-gaping at the sight;
And then there came across my heart a blight—
A sudden new despair.

For all about the place were withered hags
That laughed at me and youth,
In voices bare of tenderness and ruth;
Yet, they, too, flaunted silk and satin rags,
And flirted little fans and beauty bags—
And then I knew the truth!

In shorter time than you or I dare name,
I shall be withered too;
My roses fade away, my veins show blue;
With only life itself to curse and blame,
I shall be crowded from the witching game—
I shall! But so shall you.

THE BLACK HOURS

THE aching horror of the night,
The ghosts that clutch and tear and smite,
The sharp insistence of regret,
The wracking struggle to forget,
The all-aloneness of defeat;
While only just across the street,
The joyous world goes romping by
Too giddy-gay to hear a sigh;
And then at last the tortured sleep
When teeth are ground and eyelids weep;
And then the dazzlement of day,
As gaudy as the cloak of May;
And then the birth of hope again—
The faith in God, the faith in men.
So cloudless is the leaping light
We march defiant toward the night.

THE VOICE OF THE 'CELLO

THROUGH the moonlight café wailed the voice of the 'cello,
As a prison-cramped spirit cries out to its fellow,
And the echo sobbed back like some mad Punchinello.

"All you gluttons out there—do you hear what I'm saying?

My heart makes that music the 'cello is playing—
I am dizzy with grief—I am weary with praying!

"In our flat out in Harlem, her mother is crying!
The baby is dead, and my Annie is dying!
She's not! I can't spare her! The doctor is lying!

"Oh, hear me! Oh, listen! I'm trying to teach you
The ache of the poor, but my voice does not reach you!
Stop tapping your glasses! Don't laugh, I beseech you!"

* * * * *

"Those fellows can play pretty well over here—
How human the 'cello sounds—waiter! More beer!"

THE DIFFERENCE

AND now I know the bitter truth—the truth of man's decree,
That one false step has stilled the love you thought you
 felt for me.
Yet were *you* sunk ten fathoms deep in reckless shame
 and crime,
I'd shield you with my broken heart until the end of
 time!

HUMILITY

WHEN all the tangled land and sea
 Are webbed with so much mystery,
With so much good and so much bad,
With so much gay and so much sad—
Then who am I to sing my song
 Of what is right and what is wrong?

WHEN THE ROUGE BEGINS TO SHOW

AH! the cheek of youth has a satin weave,
And the cheek of age is dough;
And there's nothing on earth we love like beauty,
And there's nothing we hate so much as duty—
But it's childish to play at make-believe,
When the rouge begins to show.

What a trick it is to brighten the hair,
And daub the cheeks with an extra glow !
When hair is young and the strands are silky,
And the flesh is firm and deliciously milky—
But oh ! it's a pitiful sort of snare,
When the rouge begins to show.

Your chance is past, O you poor old clown !
The gallery calls, "Bravissimo" !
Go search for a job that's more befitting,
An ingle-nook and a bag of knitting,
For it's time to turn the calciums down,
When the rouge begins to show !

THE PROPAGANDIST

A LL the world is mold!
Sin is manifold!"

Wanly came the plaint to me, sobbing in the cold.

Answering my dirge

Came a mighty surge—

Came the wretched, warped, unhallowed—came the earthly scourge.

"Never laugh again,

Hopeless spawn of men!

We are but the loathesome, crawling, vermin of a fen!

Stumble through the years

Blinded with your tears—

We alone of all the earth—we alone are seers!"

Then with haughty might

Burst across my sight

All the things of loveliness, all the things of light!

Joyously a-tilt,

I poised and piped my lilt—

Piped till all the world was mellowed where the sweetness spilt!

Answering my song,

Followed on a throng—

Followed on the beautiful, the youthful and the strong:

Laden was the breeze

Underneath the trees—
Laden with the chorus of a multitude of these.

“Joyous voices ring !
Joyous bodies swing !
Through the realm of what should be joyous laughter
ring !
Hail the coming years !
Mankind, dry your tears !
We alone of all the earth—we alone are seers !”

THE THICKNESS OF BLOOD

WHEN I was a clamoring whelp—
A frail little image of man—
I reached and they gave me their help
And taught me the love of the clan;
For blood is thick
And water is thin,
And the best for a man
Is a man's own kin.

Then back in the seed-time I came,
As gay as a rilletting stream,
And their lovingness mellowed my name,
So I gave them the heart of my dream;

And one said “The fool” and “The dolt!”
And one said “I’ll teach him his place!”
And one said “I’ll break him—the colt!”
And one said “The shame—the disgrace!”

I stumbled outside with a groan—
On fire with their merciless hurt,
And I found an old beggar alone,
And I crept to his side in the dirt;

And for fear that my senses would break,
Out there in the cold and the dim,
I answered the throb and the ache
And whispered my dreaming to him.

And his crippled old arms caught me tight
In the clasp of a true brotherhood,
For there, in the blackness of night,
The stranger—the wretch—understood;
So blood isn't thick,
If water is thin;
And the worst for a man
Is a man's own kin!

THE PROMPTER

BRAVE little Puppet, be gay!
They have trampled your vision to dust,
They have plundered your soul
Of its glorious goal,
But smile at the villains—you must!
Though you stagger and fall on the black-shadowed
way.
Brave little Puppet, be gay!

BECAUSE I AM FREE

I WAVE my arms to the sunlit skies,
I dance my toes on the earth,
I shame the night with my pagan cries,
I shock dull fools with my mirth—
But none of your threats can frighten me
Because I am free. Because I am free.

And I'll touch my lips to the last red wine,
I'll gather the very last thrill,
I'll drink till the very last joy is mine,
Till passion in me is still—
And none of your threats can frighten me
Because I am free. Because I am free.

There is always a thin gray pointed blade
Whose going is sure and swift—
A red hot veil, then a pale blue shade
In which to shudder and drift—
So none of your threats can frighten me
For I'll still be free. For I'll still be free.

FEMININE WANDERLUST

FARE you well! I am off down the long, rocky road,
And my heart shall grow light with the lift of
the load;
I'll carol to beetle and cricket and bird
In a mystic, weird way that no mortal has heard.

I'll crumple the earth with my cool finger-tips
And crush the wild berries to redden my lips;
I'll join in the revels of fairy and wight
And pile me a pillow of leaves for the night.

Ah, dreams are delicious and freedom is dear!
But to tell you the truth, why, I'd rather be here
With my foot on the crib and my work never done,
And the thrill of his lips at the drop of each sun.

THE DELIVERANCE

I SENT him on his wander-way
And bade him venture free;
But ah! I knew some shining day
He'd come back home to me.

I stayed apart, all hungry-sweet,
Because I understood
That men may lie, and love, and cheat,
But women must be good.

He came. I crept into his arms,
My body trembling so
To feel him weave those golden charms
Of the mystic long ago.

He pushed me from him wanton-wise,
And I, stone dead with pain,
Looked up into his faithless eyes,
And waked to life again.

I might have bowed before his will,
Content to serve and sigh,
But he has left me free to thrill,
To love—to cheat—to lie.

THE MUTINEER

THE *me* that all the world may see
Is stiff *conventionality*.
But hid behind that frozen glance,
A million little devils dance.

The ones that scale the darkling hills,
The ones that ford the ruffled rills,
The ones that shout aloud and sing,
The ones that ride the eagle's wing,

The ones that love, the ones that hate,
The ones that slyly wink at fate,
The ones that sneer at social rule
But shun the martyr as a fool.

Pray hold your tongue, and courtesy;
It leaves you beautifully free;
For if you openly deride,
Then tell me, fool—where shall you hide?

THE ONLY ONE LEFT

I WUSHED you'd seen our Fido makin' for that
covered stool

When old Si Holcomb come up here to figger on the
mule,

Old Si he started off to spin his yarn about the cat,
And Fido give one awful howl, and stretched hisself
out flat;

And when you latched the gate, and he knew Si was
sure nuff gone,

He come a-creepin' out to stretch and give one awful
yawn;

And 'fore I knew it there he was asleep on that there
cot—

I guess I'm foolish 'bout him, but he's all the child
we got.

You 'member Susan-Jane and Mary-Ann? Oh! I
dunno—

It don't jest seem exactly right fer them to up and
grow,

And squeeze their lovely yaller curls all tight up into
plaits,

And throw their pink sunbonnets off fer stylicher
hats;

And them tight jersies. Zekel, well, now don't you
recollect,

They looked like two gray herrin's 'thout the gumption
to object;

And Jimmy's little Sunday pants so tight he couldn't sit,
And you a-tellin' him that they was jest a reg-lar fit.

Now Susan-Jane's in Kansas—got a yaller-head herself;
And me and you is sot as pickle jars on that there shelf;
And Mary-Ann's in Tennessee, and Jim's gone up the
state—

It did seem once that he'd live here, but reckon 't warn't
his fate.

It would be kinder nice to have his younguns mussin'
round—

A-smearin' up the jam-pot and a-fiddlin' in the ground.
It's kinder got expensive paintin' up the place each year,
But I'm forever 'spectin' some the chuldern's comin'
here.

Now look't that dog a-layin' with his feet up in the air—
I never see a human dog like that one anywhere.

Go hide yer hat whar he can see it—bet he knows the
trick—

He's got it. Ain't he smart? Now go and hide yer
walkin' stick.

And throw his ball as fur's the well and make him
fetch it back,

And hide yourself as quick's yer can behind that 'tater
sack!

Now see if he'll come smell yer pipe if you get down
and squat?

I guess I'm foolish 'bout him, but he's all the child we
got.

DEAR OLD SIXTY

DON'T laugh at the fashionable cut of my gown,
And call me a silly bedizened old clown;
Don't laugh at my heels and my ruffles and lace—
At the waves in my hair and the flush on my face.

Last night just at bedtime, I said to myself,
"Why pack yourself up on the toppermost shelf,
When a bit of assistance from nature or art
Sends a youthfuller rush of the blood through your
heart?"

"What use can there be in a faded old fright
With two pairs of 'specs' to encourage her sight—
With a vinegar face and a scorpion tongue
And a soul from which all the old sweetness is wrung?"

So I knelt by my trunk, and went fumbling about
Till I found the old rouge pot and smuggled it out;
And there by the mirror with laughter and thrill
I laid on the color with old-fashioned skill.

If I leave off the roses, I droop in the back,
And settle askew like the time-honored sack,
But the roses uphold me through bone-ache and twinge,
So I'll die in my boots—living up to my tinge.

I like it, so what do I care if you feel
That the blossoms don't look to you—well—very real?
To me they're the breath of a conquering spell,
For the eyes of old sixty don't see very well!

THE RAMPAGING SOUL

ACH morning I lie in my soft-cushioned bed,
Awaiting the sunbeams that dance through the shade,
With three feather pillows tucked under my head;
Was ever a body so wretchedly made?
Then, sounding their charms like some deep-voiced brigade,
Comes the chorus of kettles and stove-lids and coal—
The kitchen's enchanting, tin-pan fusillade;
And off and away goes my rampaging soul.

On hot afternoons when the sun shimmers red,
When my heart thuds and hammers, then stops still—
afraid,
I finish my labors, exhausted, half dead;
Was ever a body so wretchedly made?
Then up from the fields come the rhodomontade
Of Bobolink, Song Sparrow, Finch, Oriole,
Inviting me out to their leaf-roofed arcade;
And off and away goes my rampaging soul!

At night when my spirit is worn to a shred,
And I meekly submit to the sweet proffered aid,
How often my patient old doctor has said,
“Was ever a body so wretchedly made?”
Then leaping the stairs and the high balustrade
Come the voices I love, in a charmed rigmarole;
And out on the dark floats an old serenade;
And off and away goes my rampaging soul!

O Powers that made me, don't try to evade!
Was ever a body so wretchedly made?
Yet point out some bright, unattainable goal;
And off and away goes my rampaging soul.

THE ADVENTURER

THE wife and babes are a wholesome load,
And sweet is the cloistered spot,
But I'll take my nights on the open road
Away from the vine-clad cot.

For a 'bo I am and the earth's my right,
And a roof-tree's hum-drum stale;
And I'd barter three meals in the home firelight
For a vision of rover's ale!

A DOUBLE GAME

WHY are my lips like the spill of a cherry?
Why are my cheeks like the pink of a rose?
I'm friends with a very conventional fairy
Who gives me in secret two workaday beaux;
And the love of my life has an iron right arm,
But the love of my dreams is the love with the charm,
And they know not each other, for I am too wary—
But that's why my lips are as red as a cherry.

THE REPROACH

OMADDENED nations! Dare you face the Lord
And pray to him for victory's reward?
Rise up from where you kneel—in slime and mud,
From mangled mothers' breasts and brothers' blood!
God's answered prayers are with the glorious sun
And with the peasant when his work is done;
With little children when their dimples smile;
With buttercups and daisies, mile on mile.
Shall he forswear these joys of precious worth
To stride the bloody battlefields of earth?
What devil's tongue has let this madness grow—
That man should ask his God to bend so low!

WOMAN

WHEN she's vexed she pretends with the coo of a dove;

She pretends to be shy when she's bold;
She pretends she will marry for nothing but love,
When she's busy prospecting for gold.

It's her business in life to pretend what she's not;

She pretends she pretends to pretend,
Till tangled all up in her intricate plot,
She doubts her own word in the end.

And deep in the night when she struggles alone,

And Truth—poor crushed Truth—begs a “Why”,
Even then with a groan, she crawls back on her throne
And pretends Truth herself is a lie!

WE MEET HER EVERY DAY

SLY old Mrs. Grundy—bah!
Mountebank and gypsy!
I am through with all your wiles;
I am through with cant and styles;
I am free to laugh Hah! Hah;
Love has made me tipsy.

Down the darkling road I tramp,
All my nerves a-tingle,
Crying out when I am sad,
Screeching out when I am glad.
In my hand a merry lamp,
In my heart a jingle!

Oh! how comforting to flee
Far away from duty;
Learning how to love and live,
Learning how to take and give,
Learning how to flutter free
In the clouds with beauty!

In the clouds—ay, true enough!
Fancyings amuse me;
Nothing's real but me and you—
What I dream, I never do;
Mrs. Grundy, I'm a bluff;
Won't you please excuse me?

MY LADY LOVETH

WHAT is the sign of love? A sigh,
A quivering lip, a wistful eye?
A dreamy mind, a careless tress,
A sweet disorder in her dress?
A waning hunger, fleeting blush,
And when *he* comes—a timid hush?

Ah no! An even breath, a lip
Too steadfast for the artless slip;
An eye as cool as Autumn rain;
A circumspect and scheming brain;
A silken-netted, marcelled head;
A costume sleek as buttered bread;

An appetite for fine cafés;
A blush that once perfected, stays;
A clever tongue that, sweet and fast,
Talks only *him* and *his*; and last—
A hold on *him* that rivaleth
The clutch of hounds before the death.

THE MOTHER JOB

IT really isn't hard to be a mother,
There really isn't very much to do;
The days are just exactly like each other—
You simply shut your eyes and wander through.

For six o'clock is time enough for rising,
And getting all the children washed and dressed,
And breakfast cooked—it really is surprising,
But mothers never seem to need a rest.

The lunches must be packed, and jackets rounded,
And everybody soothed and sent to school;
To say that mother rushes is unfounded—
She's nothing more to manage as a rule,

Unless it is to finish piles of sewing,
And cook and wash and iron, scrub and sweep,
To order food, and keep the furnace going,
And then—perhaps—to hide herself and weep.

And when at last she's tucked them under covers,
And seen to doors that Dad's forgot to lock—
Triumphantly at midnight, she discovers
She's nothing more to do till six o'clock!

THE OLD BELLE'S DRINKING SONG

TO what shall I drink with this mild cup of tea?
To the nights and the days that were jolly?
To the men that have broken their hearts over me?
To the mistletoe sprays and the holly?
To the mild summer nights that were moonlit and
breezy?
Ah, no—for who values the things that come easy?

I'll drink to the dresses I couldn't afford;
To the women I've envied and hated.
I'll drink to the times when my brain-cells were bored;
To the loves that were sweet and ill-fated;
To the snubs and the flicks and the fears and the
aching;
To the times when my iron-clad heart was near
breaking!

I'll drink to the bitter campaign for a man—
Most any old man that had money;
To the shrewd reconnoitre, the miscarried plan;
To the years with no milk and no money.
A toast! To the married life I might have led!
Just another last cup, then away to my bed
Where my very last chance lies so comfortably curled—
The soothiest husband in all this nice world.

THE PRODIGAL

'WAY back home the summer's coming,
Grass is sprouting on the lawn,
Wasps against the panes are thrumming,
Swallows welcome in the dawn.

In this great big selfish city
People never notice me;
No one offers love or pity—
I'm a paper boat at sea.

I may freeze in winter's raw gust,
Kick the snow with summer shoes,
Light my grate in June or August,
Eat and drink just when I choose;

Open windows when it's raining,
Read beneath a light that glares,
Spend my money entertaining,
Live or die—for no one cares.

Way back home there's no such blindness
To the way one lives and moves;
Way back home they burst with kindness,
Life goes sliding by in grooves.

April fourth they patched the screening,
Painted up the garden seats;
Spring! and April tenth spring cleaning,
Every stick is swathed in sheets.

Season hot? They melt and smother
In their flannels day by day;
"Summer underclothes," says mother,
"Can't be worn till first of May."

Hall's in darkness at eleven,
No one dares to move about;
Meals at seven, twelve, and seven—
Come in late—you do without.

Mother rules with firm conviction—
Deals out good advice to each—
Thinks their thoughts—corrects their diction—
Knocks their friends—and curbs their speech.

"Home!" the word brings bitter anguish;
Tears and sighs I interweave
For the years I had to languish
Till I got the nerve to leave.

BALLADE OF OLD HOUSEHOLD ACCOUNTS

She

THESE old accounts! They mean a fight;
(He's feeling good—it's that cold beer)

I'd rather handle dynamite;

Their very crumple hurts my ear.

What makes you look so pleased, my dear?

He

Your dinner was delicious.

She

Oh! thanks; these bills then—while you're here.

He

How very thoughtless women are!

When I am smoking my cigar—

The time is unpropitious.

She

Perhaps it wasn't really right;

Those bills of course might interfere

With his digestion, so tonight

I'll try my best to engineer

The job before he eats; it's queer,

Such times he's less capricious.

The bills, now, Charles, don't play austere.

He

A woman has no *savoir faire*;

When I am hungry as a bear

The time is unpropitious.

She

I'll try again. The sun's so bright;
(I think he's caught the morning cheer);
A woman should have second sight.

He

Great air this morning, Guinevere,
It makes one sure of his career,
And ever so ambitious.

She

Come, then, the bills, my chanticleer!

He

Before one breakfasts? Can't you see
You'd really spoil my day for me—
The time is unpropitious.

ENVOY

O husbands young and husbands sere!
What worse trial can you wish us?
For settling bills, it would appear,
All times are unpropitious.

BALLADE OF GOOD LITERATURE

SOME people read Sir Walter Scott,
While others bow before Flaubert;
And Dickens must not be forgot,
Nor Balzac with his fetching ware;
Such holy names my shelf can spare,
They do not meet my urgent need,
Their charms I easily forswear,
This is the book I like to read.

It's dog-eared back a sorry blot,
All scorched and curled from smoke and flare,
Behold it! smeared with smudge and spot,
Reposing on the kitchen chair;
Good literature thought out with care,
Sound logic all for which I plead—
There's nothing better anywhere;
This is the book I like to read.

Oh, soup and fish and beans in pot!
Oh, dainties made of pomme de terre!
Oh, tart of peach or apricot!
Oh, soufflé mixed in silent prayer!
All recipes to which I'm heir,
The same that were my mother's creed;
And thousands more are printed there;
This is the book I like to read.

ENVOY

O spouse of mine, to you I swear
No fine editions stir my greed;
First, last and always, I declare,
This is the book I like to read.

THE STOREROOM

WILD berries from the mountain side,
And all the orchard's luscious pride,
In bottled hoard;
The summer sun and summer rain
And winds that will not blow again—
All safely stored.

But unseen ghosts are guarding there—
The blistered hand, the stifling air,
The labored breath.
The aching limbs, the scalding sweat,
The family's uncancelled debt—
And Summer's death.

WOMAN—THE MARTYR

WHEN I cut out forty night-gowns and a dozen under-skirts,

And a pile of certain things I shall not mention,
When a bolt of Scottish flannel that's intended to be shirts

Lies in waiting for my scissory intention,

Then I envy all the women-folk who cannot sew at all,

And I wonder if I'm not a trifle foolish,

When I make up miles of muslin every Spring and every Fall

In a manner that my husband says is mulish.

But I tell him I am helpless. Things are horrid, ready-made,

For to use them's been my earnest endeavor;
But they pucker and they frazzle, and they rip and rot and fade,

So I've really got to be a slave forever.

Oh, he sympathizes keenly as he views the snowy heap,

And I warn him that I'll never burrow through it;

Then he kisses me contritely while in martyrdom I weep—

But the truth is that I really like to do it!

REVERIE DE LA RAG BAG

I'VE cut the faded drawing strings
And spilled out every rag,
And lo! vain necromancy brings
A retrospective jag.

A bit of yellow braiding sewn
To brilliant red brocade!
Frail rainbow silk—how pale it's grown,
Despite its costly grade!

How perfectly I see those frocks,
The envy of my set;
I wore them both with choker stocks
That choke in memory yet.

My word! that green alpaca skirt
With crimson folds below
And little leaden weights that girt
Me so I couldn't grow!

Bespangled lace, just one short inch
Festooned with silken scrim,
Revives the pain of boots that pinch
And wedding bells—and him.

Alas! this black and orange net
That jarred my reddish hair!
Its hundred hooks I can't forget—
And how they made him swear!

Oh, brown and purple snakey lines!

Oh, silks of torrid hue!

Oh, pink with tangled ivy vines!

Oh, black with baby blue!

I was a poem, was I not,

In purple, red and green?

Great jumping, thundering, hoopskirts!—what

A freak I must have been!

THERE AIN'T NO SICH ANIMAL

AND simpletons would like to feel,
"One love and only one is real!"

There are as many loves for each

As stray within our eager reach;

And he or she who longs anon

For faithfulness and sweet romance,
Must cast himself, or her, upon

A desert isle without a chance.

GREAT HEARTEDNESS

WHAT rot all this talk about soul-mates!
I've Jim, Tom, Bill, Toby and Paul;
It's perfectly clear that they're equally dear,
For I've told the same things to them all.

I've smoothed out their brows with my fingers,
I've cooed in their separate ears;
They've all held my hands and obeyed my commands,
And they've all kissed the salt of my tears.

But my dimples are turning to wrinkles,
So it's me for the mooted high dive;
I've got to draw straws—Oh, the stupid old laws!
I could be so contented with five.

LOVE AND LINGERIE

SHE broidered them so pleasingly,
She flaunted them so teasingly ;
The ribboned bits of fluffiness,
The tucks and piles of puffiness,
Before the wedding day.

I watched her dimpled rosiness,
And dreamed of future coziness
When all her smiles and witchery,
And all that luring stitchery,
Would come to me to stay.

The honeymoon flew dizzily ;
One day I found her busily
Arranging all the lacy things,
The lovely, dainty, racy things,
In orderly array.

She said, "I'd like to wear 'em all
(The dears) but laundries tear 'em all;
And then we're married, too, and so
Most anything will do, and so
I'll pack 'em all away."

THE BUSINESS WOMAN

OH! I'm the clever person in the nifty tailor-made,
In the freshly-laundered chimesette and gloves;
Oh! I'm the one that stalks about in darkness, unafraid,
Oh! I'm the business woman without loves.

But my! if you could see me when I get back home at
night,
When I shed the artificials that adorn,
With my hair brushed slick as bacon, you might say,
"The awful fright!"
If I didn't look so dreadfully forlorn.

In my dressing gown and slippers I am really just a
frump,
And perhaps I'm guilty of some jealous tears;
How I envy idle women when I sink down in a lump,
And long to sleep a hundred million years.

I get hungry for a petting, I get hungry just to cling,
I get hungry for some clothes I didn't buy,
I get hungry for a husband and a shiny wedding ring—
And in lieu I have a good old-fashioned cry.

But next morning when the clock goes off, I dart out,
like a fish,
Through the shower while my tingling body sings;
I've forgotten last night's envy, and my "honest-injun"
wish
Is to join the luring rush of bigger things.

THE DIVORCE GAME

DIVORCE is perfectly sane and sound,
But it's dreary not having a man around.
You may puff on a butt to get the smell—
But somehow it hasn't the personnel.
You may prop the paper against the bowl—
It's the look of a man without the soul.
You may live in disorder to get the feel—
There's a masculine tone, but it isn't real.
I've worked at the game for a month or two,
And honest-to-God! this is *entre nous*—
Divorce is perfectly sane and sound—
But I like the fact of a man around.

TREASON

WHY should I love, my love, but thee?
There are so many *me's* in me!
I need one love for sacred heights,
Another love for gaudy lights,
A jolly love, a love sedate,
A simple love, a love that's great.
And when I've loved them each in turn,
The homely me of me will yearn
For flaming logs and soothing tea—
And then I'll fly back here to thee!

THE GAME

I'M a liquid, soft-eyed cheater, I'm a treasury depleter,
I'm a gambler, and I've learned to stack the pack;
I'm a saccharine blackmailer, a policeman and a jailer,
I'm a cultivated mental jumping jack;
I'm a parlor entertainer, I'm a very shrewd campaigner;
When it's worth my while—a monkey on a stick;
I'm a listener, pumper, talker, dancer, sitter, runner,
walker;
I'm a just-this-side-the-border lunatic.
If the law could only reach me, it would grab me and
impeach me;
But it can't, for I'm a licensed charlatan.
Lord! It takes some discipline, for it's a life job that
I'm in for—
I'm a woman, and I'm married to a man!

DIFFERENT METHODS

WHEN the dinner bell tinkles on Riverside Drive,

Mistress Phyllis is coaxed to the meal by her nurse;
The Mater and Pater Familias arrive,
As silent and stately as plumes on a hearse.

It's a little bit different on Avenue A,

Where gay Mrs. Tony is lathered with sweat'
From scrubbing and washing and cooking all day;

"Come Beatrice, Donatello, Bologna, Raffaello, Pietro,
Giuseppe, Giacomo, Bellini! Come eata Sphaget!"

THE CUTEY

LIKE mother's cross-barred apple pie,
She lures you when you wander by;
That baby mouth! Those satin cheeks!
That silver cadence when she speaks!

That tiny, rosebud, angel face,
Framed in a fluff of tulle and lace;
That hair through which the wavelets run—
An aureole of light and sun.

How sweet! Oh, yes! we know the type;
Its brains would nearly fill a pipe;
It never has a thought to spare
From boots and dress, or hats and hair.

Its conversation, "Simply grand",
"Well, really, now", "It beats the band",
"So good of you", and "Must you go?"
With polka dots of "Yes" and "No".

With all her fuss and folderol,
She's just a stupid little doll;
How many men with any brain
Would turn to look at her again?

How many, understanding life,
Would ask her to become their wife—
Would trust to her their whole career?—
About a million every year!

THE LAND OF DARE

OH! marriage is sweet—in a straight-laced way,
And home is a place to yawn,
And cuddle down snug at the end of day,
And rise with the red-streaked dawn;
But it's stale, stale, stale for a high-flown soul,
Each night in the back-log glare,
So I pillow my face in a soft cool place,
And sail to the land of dare!

Where men are lovers, and love rings true,
And thrills are the dole of fate;
Where all the women you ever knew,
Swing in at the open gate;
For there we may feel with a brim-full heart,
And a passion that's strong and real,
In the Greek-god way for a year or a day—
In the way we were meant to feel!

It's a hungering, eager, great, great crowd
Of virtuous maids and dames;
And the register pages are white and proud
With a legion of unsoiled names;
And the only women we do not meet,
Are the prophets marked out from birth—
For the women who dare! Oh! they never go there—
They live their dreams on earth!

PROSE AND POETRY

THE one, undaunted, sails along—
Her clear, cool brow could think no wrong;
The city dust-blow in her face,
She moves with mingled force and grace—
A Victory of Samothrace.

Her sister stays a while to pose,
Or dream a dream, or smell a rose;
All things are lovely to her sight—
The pain, the joy, the dark, the light—
A-thrill, she stumbles through the night.

Forget those roses by the way!
This earth's no earth for dreams, I say—
And yet the gods on high decree,
That stumbling dreamers first shall see
The truths, that beckon Victory.

CHILDREN

MADE out of mistletoe, bubbles and holly,
Guarded with kisses and aching and folly;
Who could foretell, by your dimples and laughter,
The treacherous pain that is bound to come after?
But wait! In the end you will win for your folly
Your own little mistletoe, bubbles and holly!

THE BEWILDERED SEER

IKNOW that eggs and butter-bread
Will make me strong and wise;
I know that silk-worms spin their thread
To dress the butterflies.

When roses blossom on the earth
Their tears are mist and dew;
When little babies die at birth,
They paint the heavens blue.

I know a thousand stranger things—
Like toads that turn to glass,
And bats that take off water-wings,
And dry them on the grass.

But tell me where the hours stay,
And where time keeps the light,
And how a big thing like To-day
Can hide itself To-night.

LITTLE CENTRAL PARK WEST

DON'T I wished that I was free?
Don't I wished they'd let me be
Just a little alley kid
Like Viola, Mike and Sid?
No one sends them off to bed;
No one combs their curly head;
No one says they "must" or "shan't";
No one says they "won't" or "can't";
No one makes them bathe and dress
Even if they're in a mess;
They can stay outside all night,
And fuss and pinch and scratch and fight,
And eat banana peels and dirt,
And go all day without a shirt,
And swaller fruit that isn't ripe—
Wished I was a gutter snipe!

SWINGING

SWING me high into the tree-tops!
Let me ride upon the air,
Till I feel a tiny shiver
When the branches rock and quiver!
Swing me higher if you dare!
Swing me high into the tree-tops,
Let me ride upon the air!

I will hold the ropes so tightly—
Swinging is a lovely play;
Swing me higher than the peaches—
Higher than the gate-post reaches!
Let me almost fly away!
I will hold the ropes so tightly—
Swinging is a lovely play!

Lovely, lovely, please to leave me;
I would feel the old cat die;
I am swinging lower, lower,
I am swinging slower, slower—
Now it's just a rock-a-bye—
Lovely — lovely — please — to — leave — me —
I — would — feel — the — old — cat — die.

THE WIND

I AM the wind, your brother;
I rattle your roof at night;
I puff with my breath to smother
Your wee little candle light.

I blow on the clothes to dry them,
And chase all the clouds away,
And kiss tiny folks when I spy them
Careless of what they say.

I shake the sign of the barber,
And blow the dust in your eyes;
I sail the boats to the harbor,
And keep your kites in the skies.

The mill I turn with my power,
The power that saws the logs,
And grinds the corn and the flour,
And scatters away the fogs.

So aren't you really ugly,
To fuss when I'm loud and bold,
For while you are reading snugly—
I'm way out here in the cold.

THE SUN

THE sun makes all the cherries red,
And makes the oak trees tall,
And ripens berries by the shed
And grapes along the wall.

The sun makes wrens and robins sing,
And makes the kittens play,
And stretch and roll like anything,
And frolic all the day.

And I'll take off my stockings, so
My legs can have some fun,
And roll up both my sleeves and go
A-swimming in the sun.

THE STRANGE LOOKING-GLASS

I KNOW the strangest looking-glass
That's sunk into the ground,
And little buds and blades of grass,
Caress it all around.

And down within, I see my face,
And all the lovely sky;
And fluffy clouds that look like lace,
Go swiftly rolling by.

It's full of everything that's queer—
Just like a picture book;
But oh! I must not tease you dear—
It's just a little brook.

SHADDERS

OUR new house is way up yonder
On the hill by City Park,
And I tell you it's a wonder
When I'm up there after dark.

It's the scarey way the shadders
Chase me everywhere I go,
Up and down the workmen's ladders,
In and out, and thus and so.

All the boards just keep a-creakin'
Every single step I take,
And behind me comes a-sneakin'
Somethin' cold that makes me quake.

Reckon it's because the winders
And the doors ain't finished yet,
That the specks, as black as cinders,
Whisk about and never set.

But just one thing keeps me thinkin',
Keeps me 'wake all night about—
When it's finished will the slinkin'
Things be in the house, or out?

THE BEST BOOK

IF I should read a million books,
I would not be as wise,
As if I studied trees and brooks
Out underneath the skies.

For there is where the pigeons build,
And where they try their wings,
And where the good brown earth is tilled,
And where the robin sings.

And where the silk-worm weaves and spins,
And where the blossoms blow,
And where the rivulet begins,
And where the cherries grow.

A million books will do no harm—
But think of nature's stores
Of birds and bees and endless charm!
Hurrah for out-of-doors!

THE RAG MAN IS COMING

OH! gather the bottles, the cans and the rags,
The strings and the papers and silly old tags—
Oh! tinkely, tinkely, tinkely, bell!
The rag man is coming, I know him so well
By his tinkely, tinkely bell.

He'll give you a candy or maybe a cent,
And off he will jog on his journey content,
With his tinkely, tinkely, tinkely bell.
Just give him some bottles, and all will be well
With the tinkely, tinkely bell.

So clean up the attic and cellar today,
And gather the rubbish with no more delay,
For the tinkely, tinkely, tinkely bell.
There is nothing on earth that will please him so well,
Old tinkely, tinkely bell!

A LITTLE BOY'S WISH

I WOULD like to be the leader of a military band,
I would like to make the horns go "Pumpty pum!"
I would like to train the drummer so that when I raised
my hand
He would make the drum go "Bumpty, bumpty, bum!"

I would like to march before them with a feather in
my hat,
With a golden stick a-twirling on my thumb;
I would like to have a monkey and a boneless acrobat
Who could make the people laugh when they were
glum.

I would like to make the world a very merry circus tent,
Full of lolly-pops and ginger-snaps and gum,
Full of military music that would follow where I went,
With the drummer beating "Bumpty, bumpty, bum!"

THE GREAT WHITE HORSE

I'M as proud as a knight and as rich as a king,
For I ride a white charger around in a ring—
With a trotty-trot-trot and a swingy-swing-swing—
With his trotty-trot-trotty-trot-trot.

And he jumps like a flea, and he runs like a deer,
And he wears a long tail and a floppy old ear,
And he knows how to pitch, and he knows how to rear—
With his trotty-trot-trotty-trot-trot.

He never drinks water and never eats feed.
Does he get himself curried? Indeed he does not.
He's my steady old, funny old, hobby-horse steed—
With his trotty-trot-trotty-trot-trot.

SCISSORS TO GRIND

SCISSORS to grind!
Scissors to grind!

Oh! come let us go to the kitchen and find,
A knife or a saw or some shears if we can,
To bring to the kindly old grindery man!

He moistens his wheel,
And lays on the steel,
And pedals his foot with a great deal of zeal.

The water just spittles and spattles and spops—
But the kindly old grindery man never stops,

Till the edges are bright
As the stars in the night,
And they look to his squinty old eye to be right;
Then we give him a nod and a shiny new dime
And ask him to call again some other time.

THE MUD PIE BAKER

I 'M a jolly baker;
Come around and buy,
Buns or bread or cake or
Ginger-snaps or pie!

I will sell you twenty
Cookies for a pin,
Or an awful plenty
Puddings in a tin.

I will sell you muffins
Made of mud-cake-dough,
Full of rocky stuffins—
But of course you know,

I am only cheating.
You are far too wise
To believe in eating
Hot! Mud! Pies!

WAKE UP, OLD EARTH!

WAKE up, old Earth! You sleepy head!
It's time to shout and play.
You sleepy head! You slug-a-bed!
Today's the first of May.

All winter long you've snored and slept
Beneath the snow and ice;
All April long you've sniffed and wept—
Is such behavior nice?

Today's the first of May, old world;
It's time to dance and sing,
For all the rosebuds are uncurled,
And birds are on the wing.

You'll laugh and stay awake till Fall—
Five grass-green months, and then,
When winter blows his icy call,
You'll go to sleep again.

SEE-SAW

SEE-SAW! See-saw! Over by the gate!
See-saw! See-saw! Up and down with Kate!
Katie is a lovely girl.
How she bobs that golden curl!
Down she comes and up she goes;
See her spread her pinkie toes!
She is such a playful mate—
Laughing, curly-headed Kate!

See-saw! See-saw! Such a lovely game!
She bobs! I bob! Up and down the same.
She goes up and I go down,
Laughing like a silly clown;
She goes down and I go up,
Wiggling like a jolly pup;
First we bump, and then we fly
Like a rocket to the sky.

See-saw! See-saw! Oh, I struck my knee!
See-saw! See-saw Pretty hard on me!
Do I cry and moan and fuss
Till my face is in a muss?
Not a bit. I simply smile
Though it hurts me all the while;
When we've lovely games to do,
We must take the hurtings too.

PLAY! PLAY!

IT'S wise to know your alphabet—
To read and write and spell,
And little folks should not forget
To learn their tables well;
But best of anything I say
Is learning how to romp and play.

For we may read, so I am told,
And learn piano too,
When we are tired or ill or old
With nothing else to do;
But we can only romp and play
When we are young and strong and gay.

So put your shoes and stockings on,
And grab your hat and run,
And play upon the grassy lawn
Until the day is done,
For there is nothing on this earth
So sweet and good as play and mirth.

DOUGHNUT NIGHT

FRIDAY night, as sure as fate,
When the clock is striking eight
Mama shuts the kitchen door,
Spreads some papers on the floor,
Hurries quickly to and fro,
And makes the goody doughnuts grow.

White and sticky little things,
Flat like giants' wedding rings,
Till the grease and smoky smell
Make them spitty-spat and swell.
When you think they're gonna burn—
Flippy-flop. They make a turn.

Mama fishes them about,
Makes a catch, and pulls them out;
Lays them on the pantry shelf
Where I sugar them myself.
Oh! I'm dying for a bite,
But I dasn't eat at night.

So I tumble off to bed
With the doughnuts in my head,
And I dream of doughnut hoops,
Doughnut ropes and doughnut loops.
I must run and jump them fast
Till I reach the very last
When my mother calls to me—
Breakfast! Doughnuts! Cambric tea!

HALLOW-E'EN IS COMING!

OH! thread your apples on a string,
And buy a thimble and a ring,
And all the corn that you can bring—
For Hallow-e'en is coming!

Go pick your pumpkin big and stout,
And cut old Jack-o-lanterns out,
And stick your candles all about—
For Hallow-e'en is coming!

Be sure you have a stick of lead,
A great big fool's cap for your head,
A candle burning by your bed—
For Hallow-e'en is coming!

Some tick-tack twine, a bunch of keys,
Some lanterns for the garden trees,
And tasty candy recipes—
For Hallow-e'en is coming!

We make believe on Hallow-e'en
That little fairies can be seen
All dancing 'round their king and queen.
So every little girl and boy,
Get down your silk and corduroy,
And dance yourselves about with joy—
For Hallow-e'en is coming!

NEW SHOES

NO matter how I tippy-toe,
No matter where I try to go,
My brand new shoes keep squeaking so.
You sneaky, squeaky, creaky shoe!
I really don't know what to do
With such a naughty thing as you!
You squeaky shoe!

You squeak like tiny little mice
Who've nibbled at the cheese and rice;
Now tell me, shoes, is this thing nice?
You sneaky, squeaky, creaky shoe!
I really don't know what to do
With such a naughty thing as you!
You squeaky shoe!

You squeak like squirrels in a tree,
You squeak at mother, then at me;
Now what can all this trouble be?
You sneaky, squeaky, creaky shoe!
I really don't know what to do
With such a naughty thing as you!
You squeaky shoe!

A CHANCE FOR EVERY NAUGHTY BOY

I 'VE been very, very naughty,
I 've been anything but nice,
I 've refused my bread and butter
And I 've pushed aside my rice.

I 've been rude to gentle people,
I 've been stingy with my games,
I have pouted all the morning,
And I 've said some ugly names.

And I felt most very worried
Till I heard my mother say,
"Doesn't matter, little fellow;
For tomorrow's New Year's Day!"

So I 'll start tomorrow morning,
With a smile and not a tear,
Then I 'll be the bestest fellow
Every day of all the year.

THANKSGIVING

I AM thankful Summer's past
With its birds and bees;
And the Fall is here at last
With its golden trees.

I'll be thankful when the frost
Silvers rake and hoe,
And the golden leaves are lost
Underneath the snow.

I'll be thankful for the Spring,
For the buds and grass,
For the little birds that sing
Sweetly as they pass.

I am glad and thankful too;
Most the time I've found—
I would wish the same to you,
All the year around.

ANOTHER SCHOOLROOM

SCHOOL is over! School is over!
All the books are packed away!
Winter's gone with snow and shivers,
Over all the sunshine quivers!
See the boats upon the rivers!
Come and laugh and romp and play!
School is over! School is over!
And the books are packed away!

Nature's book is spread before me
Out beneath the summer sky;
I shall study birds and flowers,
River banks and shady bowers,
I shall race the woods for hours,
With the golden butterfly.
Nature's book is spread before me
Out beneath the summer sky.

I shall learn the wonder lessons
In the lovely out-of-doors;
What's a schoolroom for a fellow
When the fruit is ripe and mellow,
And the roses red and yellow
With their bursting honey-stores?
Come with me, and learn the lessons
In the lovely out-of-doors!

THE BUSY PLANTS

WHEN winter winds blew loud and cold,
And you were warm and snug,
When all the winter tales were told
Between a kiss and hug,
Way down beneath the ice and snow
The little plants were working so.

And all the roots were saying, "Now,
Catch on and dig down hard!"
And all the stems were learning how
To climb into your yard;
And little buds were dressing up
To be a rose or buttercup.

So now that all the world is gay
And school is nearly done,
You're not the only dears in May
Deserving of the sun;
For while you worked all winter through,
The little plants were working too.

IN GRANDMA'S VILLAGE

IN Grandma's village in the past
When whooping-cough beset it,
They dressed the little children fast
And sent them out to get it.

And if the measles happened through,
Dear Grandma didn't worry.
She said, "Just stop and get that too—
I think you'd better hurry."

Poor Granny thought it had to be,
And that's the thing that drove her
To have them catch it young, you see,
And get the trouble over.

But now when Miss Disease comes by,
We stand far off and rubber,
And keep our bodies well—oh, my !
We absolutely snub her.

LAUGHTER

CRY baby! Cry baby! Why do you cry,
And take all the brightness right out of your eye,
And snuffle your nosey, and pucker your face,
And draw your nice dimples ker-smack out of place?

For laughter is nicer and easier, too.
You try it some day when you've nothing to do.
It makes you contented and dimpled and fat,
And gay as a birdie and sleek as a cat.

So next time you pucker your face for a cry,
Just say to yourself in a whisper, "Not I!"
Then throw back your shoulders and lift up your head,
And give a great ripple of laughter instead.

THE OLD YEAR'S GIFT

AN old man rang the bells last night,
And knocked on every door,
And breathed against the candle light
And said, "I'll come no more."

On every step, in every town,
Before the dawn of day,
He laid a snow-robed baby down
And gently turned away.

He called, "Goodbye! goodbye! my dear,
I'll leave my work to you!"
The old man was the old, old year,
The baby was the new.

A LITTLE PHILOSOPHER IN A HOSPITAL
WARD

BEFORE I came up here to stay
I lived 'most everywhere;
My papa, he just run away—
I guess he didn't care;
We left our high-up little place,
Because my mama peddled lace,

And moved 'way down beneath the ground—
That's cheap and we could save;
I liked it there because I found
It smelled good—like a cave,
And I could dance about and sing
And play I was a pirate king.

And tie my mama to the seat,
Till she would call me "Goose,"
And steal her hairpins for a treat
While she was working loose;
She'd say "I'll punish you for this!"
And that meant just another kiss.

And then one night I woke up sick,
I spunned just like a top;
And all my heart was thumping quick
And wouldn't never stop;
And when I got back in my head
I found me laying here in bed.

I guess it was mouldy down under the ground
Where mama and I used to stay,
But there isn't a place where more flowers are found,
So big and so red and so gay.
Our walls were a forest of little green trees,
With roses and pinks bursting through,
And gathering honey were millions of bees,
And over it all—diamond dew.

The hospital paint is not pretty at all—
Just solemn and awfully clean;
If I were a gardener I'd plant on the wall
A beautiful garden of green,
White daisies and tulips and roses of red,
All lovely and fresh day and night;
And they'd wobble and bobble to each little bed,
And help little sickies to fight.

* * * * *

Don't you hear the horns a-tooting?
Oh! the circus is in town.
Don't you hear the children hooting—
Don't you see the funny clown?

And the silver bareback rider—
She's so beautiful and proud!
And the acrobat beside her—
See him bowing to the crowd!

There's the fearless lion tamer,
And she's cracking of her strap,
And the clown pretends to shame her,
With his pointed dunce's cap.

Oh! it makes me feel so lonely,
Always, always here in bed—
For the great parade is only
Passing in and out my head.

* * * * *

Last night when I was sleeping,
They came and took her out;
I wish that I'd been peeping
When they were all about.

And where could she be going?
It makes me want to cry;
She went without my knowing,
And I didn't say goodbye.

It hurts me when I worry,
But oh! I want to know
Just why they had to hurry—
And where did Mary go?

* * * * *

The mopy-man is at the door.
Come set your bucket on the floor,

And make a very dreadful slop
With swishy, swashy suds and mop—
Oh! you moppy, moppy, moppy-man,
You moppy, moppy-man!

Now, wipe the walls and clean the glass,
And shine the doorknobs when you pass,
And fold the rugs into a square,
And hang them in the sun to air!

Oh! you moppy, moppy, moppy-man,
You moppy, moppy-man!

And I am busy being sick,
And you are busy with your stick;
You do so much, indeed you do,
But just like me, you're never through.

Oh! you moppy, moppy, moppy-man,
You moppy, moppy-man!

* * * * *

Oh! the lay-awake hours in Hospitalville,
When my heart bumps away like a bob down a hill,
And the night nurse puts something all cold on my
head—
Then turns the poor crippled boy over in bed.

She calls me "Poor childie" and "My little man,"
And begs me so nicely to sleep if I can;
It's then that I shut up my eyes with my thumb,
And try to make everything all over dumb;

But off in the darkness I hear people speak,
And the cart with the rubber wheels makes a loud
squeak.

There's always excitement at night when they ride—
The babies are born, or else someone has died.

I want to know all that the noise is about.
I listen and listen, but cannot find out;
Then somebody chokes, and the nursie don't hear—
And somebody calls, and I shiver with fear.

And then just as soon as I know it is day,
And the night nurse is coming around with my tray,
I shut up my eyes, and I go to sleep tight,
Just like the to-day-time is really last night!

* * * * *

Today, when I was feeling good, they put me in a chair,
And rolled me on the rubber strip as far down as the
stair;
I passed the big sun-parlor where the roses grow in
vases,
And I saw some lovely ladies, very white in silk and
laces.
I saw some babies, new and red, all laying in a row;
If any stork is out of them, this is the place to go.

I traveled by the "Silence Hall," where rich folks do
their moaning—

They suffer even more than us—to count up by their
groaning.

I stopped at Elevatorville to laugh with crippled Ed;
He stayed when he got well because they give him meals
and bed;

I might have traveled farther down the narrow, white-
washed alley,

But I heard the dishes rattling, and I met with "Supper
Sally."

* * * * *

Down in the chapel they preached on a "movement,"

That rich people plan for the poor folks; and still,
I'm sure that the very most 'portantest 'provement,

Is so little children won't have to be ill.

Fresh air keeps my spirits bold,
And sunshine turns the world to gold.

* * * * *

Last night the world was chocolate pie,
All ready for to bake;
And when the snow fell from the sky—
It turned to wedding cake!

* * * * *

I like to shut my eyes and dream
Of skies that look like glass,
Of swimming up the shiny stream,
And baking on the grass,
Of climbing up an apple tree,
And shouting long and deep,
Of stealing songs from bird and bee—
Oh! dreams are nice to keep.

* * * * *

If I should ever go to see
The really-world—now answer me!
Would all the lovely places look
The same as in my picture book?

* * * * *

The nurse has got a little shed
Of dotted swiss upon her head;
It's got a point and slanting sides,
And when she walks it always slides;
It's small enough to fit her ear—
And not a hat at all, I fear.

I get a reg-lar bath at ten;
At twelve I get my dinner, then
I go to sleep a bit till three,
And then I get some hot beef tea.

Now folks don't get so much to eat,
A-peddling laces in the street,
But then, they get their reg'lar kisses—
And that's the thing a Sicky misses.

* * * * *

I like to steal a bag of toys
From all the wealthy girls and boys;
That's nothing very wrong, it seems,
Because I do it just in dreams.

* * * * *

I swallered on a pill tonight—it stuck as it went down.
But gee! I looked the other way and didn't even frown;
Because my book says, "Take your pills and do not fuss
or pout,

And then in just about a day, you'll all be up, and out!"

* * * * *

We chuldern have 'scoved the funniest way
Of knowing ezactly the time of the day;
When they feed us we know that it's nearly to seven;
When they bathe us all up then it's nearly to 'leven;
When they rattle the dishes it's twelve on the dot;
At one we all tumble to sleep on the spot,
We stretch ourselves out and start gaping at three,

Then nursie comes in with a cup of beef tea;
The doctor peeps in at a quarter of five,
And ten minutes later the suppers arrive;
At seven the night-nurses clean up the muss;
At eight we are off on the Sleepyville bus.

* * * * *

Now, why should anyone be scared
Of just a doctor man?
I'd hug and kiss him if I dared—
Perhaps some day I can,
My goodie doctor man!

I bet you think he 'zamines me,
And listens to my heart;
But oh! you're wrong as you can be;
He 'zamines just the chart—
And not my baddy heart!

* * * * *

When everybody's waking,
Then the night nurse goes to bed.
When everybody's sleeping,
She is waking in her head.

She never gets the sunshine,
'Cause her blinds are always drawn;
And she never gets the moonshine,
'Cause she's working till the dawn.

If you'd meet her in the hallway,
Starched all up so stiff and neat,
You would never guess that under
All the starch she's soft and sweet.

* * * * *

Last night I dreamed a goodie trip—
I sailed to Coney in a ship ;
And goodness ! it was nice to feel
The red-hot sand against my heel,
And roll upon the "Wishing Waves,"
And go exploring in the caves,
And steeplechase like well boys do,
And pay a visit to the Zoo ;
And hear the monkeys grunt and squeak
As though they tried so hard to speak ;
And see the peacocks dragging round
Their lovely tails upon the ground ;
And watch the lions snatch the meat
And hold it tight beneath their feet ;
I would have traveled farther still
But 'citemental makes me feel so ill ;
In fact, I'm just so tired I fear
I'll have to rest another year !



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